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0315087030

Los Angeles Times

13 Sunday

Monday, January 31, 1983

CC+/ 86 pages / 12c

'82 Laos Raid in Search of U.S. POWs Reported

Ex-Green Beret Says Pathet Lao Forces Killed One in His Squad; No Americans Were Found

By MARK GLADSTONE and RICHARD E. MEYER, Times Staff Writers

A retired Green Beret lieutenant colonel says he led a squad of Americans and anti-communist guerrillas on a daring raid into Laos late last year that cost one life in a futile search for American servicemen thought to be held prisoner since the Vietnam War.

The former Green Beret, James G. (B.) Gritz, 41, of Westchester, said he and his men were attacked by what he thinks were Pathet Lao forces. No Americans were hurt, Gritz said, but one of his anti-communist Laotian guerrillas was killed and three were wounded.

After a firefight that lasted about 30 minutes, Gritz said, he and his men fled into the jungle and up the side of a hill. The attackers pursued them but eventually gave up, Gritz said, adding, "It was close. We could have been killed or captured."

\$17,500 Ransom Paid

One of Gritz's men, Charles J. Patterson, 37, a former Special Forces sergeant, said a fellow American on the team was captured by the attackers, whom he identified as allies of a pro-American Laotian leader. Patterson identified the captured American as Dominic Zappone, 28, of Van Nuys.

Patterson, who lives in the Tulare County town of Dinuba, said he later heard that Zappone had been ransomed for \$17,500 and an undisclosed amount of medical supplies provided by an unidentified source.

Gritz, however, made no mention of any capture or ransom. He said Zappone stayed behind in Laos for several weeks to keep in contact with friendly forces. Gritz said he, Patterson and Gary Goldman, also from the Los Angeles area, eventually returned to Thailand after

fleeing their attackers. Gritz said Zappone returned to Thailand shortly after Jan. 1. He said Zappone was not hurt.

Gritz, a decorated veteran of Vietnam and Special Forces activities in Latin America, returned to the United States on New Year's Eve. He was interviewed by The Times before he returned to Thailand on still another rescue mission. Patterson, who served with Gritz in Vietnam, was interviewed Sunday night. He remained in the United States.

Gritz and Patterson said some of the money for their mission, which they called Operation Lazarus, came from private contributions, including \$30,000 from movie actor

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POW: Ex-Green Beret Tells of Laos Raid

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Clint Eastwood and \$10,000 from TV actor William Shatner. Neither could be reached immediately for comment.

Although Gritz refused to say so directly, he indicated that the U.S. government helped to finance the effort. Some of the funding, he declared, "isn't private money."

"The FBI has helped me; the CIA has helped us; the (U.S.) embassy (in Bangkok) has helped us; the President stands ready to support us if and when we produce an American," Gritz said. ". . . The government will not attach itself overtly for any kind of audit trail with this thing. They're petrified of it."

Gritz said he received classified intelligence from the Defense Intelligence Agency about sites in Laos where Americans may be held in captivity.

In Washington, Rear Adm. Allan G. Paulson, assistant vice director for intelligence collection management at the Defense Intelligence Agency, said, "The government is not involved with any kind of private operation, in my opinion. I think that's valid."

Embassy Won't Comment

The State Department said it could not confirm Gritz's account. "I don't have anything on this," said Rush Taylor, a duty officer at the State Department. "I don't have anything I can give you. I don't have any guidance on this."

In Bangkok, Richard Virden, a spokesman at the U.S. Embassy, declined comment. "You'll have to ask Washington on allegations which involve intelligence-type activities."

At issue is the fate of scores of Americans who remain unaccounted for in Southeast Asia since the end of the Vietnam War. Hanoi has returned 591 American prisoners, but the whereabouts of 2,494 others, most of whom are thought to be dead, remains a mystery. Many were pilots shot down in the jungles of Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia.

Most of the missing have been declared legally dead in court proceedings. But some families of those unaccounted for—and some active duty military officers—believe privately that a number might still be alive and held in captivity.

President Reagan told the National League of Families of American Prisoners and Missing in Southeast Asia last week that government intelligence is "fully focused" on those missing in action. Obtaining a

full accounting has "the highest national priority," he said.

"I pledge to you that we will take decisive action on any live sighting reports that can be confirmed," Reagan said. "I am sure you understand that some of these approaches must be done quietly."

The principal targets of Gritz's search were near the Laotian village of Sepone, about 100 miles east of the Mekong River, which forms the border between Thailand and Laos. Gritz said he had received information from Southeast Asian sources that it was possible that about 100 Americans were being held there.

On the evening of Nov. 27, Gritz said, he and his men crossed the Mekong south of Nakhon Phanom, Thailand. They made the crossing in boats, Gritz said, and together with 15 anti-communist Laotian guerrillas made their way across Highway 13 and into the Laotian jungle.

Patterson said the team had three Israeli-made Uzi semi-automatic machine guns with silencers, laser sights and night-vision gear. They carried radios, Gritz said, and stayed in touch by code with a base station they had set up in Nakhon Phanom.

Gritz said the team was also equipped with "nuclear fire-plan boxes" from Litton Industries Inc. With these boxes, Gritz said, he was able to communicate instantly, in bursts of code, with members of his team in Washington—and with Washington officials, if necessary.

He said the boxes were manufactured for West Germany and were supplied by Litton in a complicated arrangement that involved accepting \$50,000 from Litton and then using it to buy the boxes from the firm. Gritz said the communication devices were worth \$750,000.

Litton demanded the boxes back after the mission ended, Gritz said. Leo K. Thorsness, Litton corporate director of civic affairs and a former POW who Gritz said was involved in the equipment transfer, said he

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needed to "let this rest" and talk to his company. Other Litton officials were unavailable.

With this sophisticated gear in rucksacks, the Gritz team maneuvered through the jungle and entered a mountain region inside Laos, Gritz said. Their goal, he said, was to contact friendly guerrilla forces and obtain more information about the alleged American POWs and how they were being held.

Three days inside Laos, Patterson said, they encountered hostile forces.

Gritz described the encounter this way:

He and his men stopped one morning about 10 a.m. to check their capability to communicate with Nakhon

Times staff writers Paul Dean and Bob Sector contributed to this article.

Phanom. "We moved on," Gritz said, "and about 13:30 we stopped to eat. We circled up, and at 14:00 a hostile force walked up on us.

"They opened fire—mortars, M79 grenade launchers, Soviet-made AK-47 assault rifles," Gritz said.

He estimated that the fire came from about 10 or 15 meters away. "Fairly close," Gritz said. "It was about 30 minutes until we broke contact. . . .

"A little guy was killed. A friendly little guy. Three people were injured—all Laotians. One was hit in the cheek. Another was hit twice in the shoulder, and the third suffered a wound in the leg. . . .

"The rucksacks we had were ridiculously heavy and large. In my own case, being stuck on the side of a mountain with a 150-pound rucksack on my back, I was thinking to myself, 'I hope my legs don't give out,' and thinking (that) if somebody grabs me, I'm going to turn loose of my rucksack and kick the crap out of 'em and press on.

"But I had all my mission essentials, my cameras, my communication box, in my sack, so I wasn't going to give that bastard up unless they physically grabbed me."

Gritz said that he and his men fled into the jungle and up the hill. The attackers chased them "for a while," Gritz said, "but in the jungle, in the mountain jungle especially, it's very difficult."

Eventually, he said, the pursuers gave up.

Patterson, who fell 20 feet while crossing a ravine and injured his foot, said Gritz decided to return to Thailand for more weapons and people.

Team members swam back across the Mekong at night, Patterson said. "I was burning up with fever," he said. "The river felt so damn good. When I got halfway across, I didn't think I was going to make it.

"If it had been another 20 feet wider, I would have floated out to the South China Sea."

On Dec. 9, Patterson said, Gritz and Goldman recrossed the Mekong into Laos. Because of his fever, Patterson said, he returned to Bangkok and subsequently returned to the United States.

Gritz said that once back inside Laos, he, Goldman and Zappone established contact with two guerrilla forces opposed to the communist Pathet Lao government and convinced them to help gather POW information.

On Dec. 29, Gritz said, he and Goldman recrossed the Mekong back into Thailand to renew their Thai visas. He said Zappone stayed in Laos to maintain contact with one of the friendly guerrilla groups.

Gritz said Zappone recrossed the Mekong into Thailand in early January. "He's OK," Gritz said. "He's as tough as woodpecker lips."

Since his military retirement in 1979, Gritz has mounted two other missions to rescue POWs.

During his first effort in early 1981, which he called Operation Velvet Hammer, he assembled a team in Florida but said he was asked to halt the operation because an official government effort was being mounted.

In his second effort later that year, which he called Operation Grand Eagle, he succeeded in launching a four-man team. It collected information about possible POW sightings from Laotian refugees in Thailand.

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Officials Probe Legality of '82 Raid Into Laos

By RICHARD E. MEYER
and MARK GLADSTONE,
Times Staff Writers

The officer in charge of intelligence collection for the Pentagon said Monday that he tried to warn former Green Beret Lt. Col. James G. (Bo) Gritz that his POW rescue missions into Laos may be illegal.

At the same time, the FBI said it had investigated Gritz for possible violation of a federal law that bans any private military "expedition or enterprise" against such countries as Laos, with which the United States is at peace.

The investigation was closed, an FBI spokesman said, when the U.S. attorney's office in Los Angeles declined to prosecute.

But the chief assistant U.S. attorney said Monday afternoon that Justice Department officials were reviewing new information about Gritz's expeditions.

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The question of legality arose as William Shatner, who portrayed Capt. James Kirk in the television series "Star Trek," confirmed that he had given Gritz \$10,000 for an option on his life story. Shatner said he wanted to portray Gritz in a film about his exploits.

Although associates of Gritz say the money helped finance efforts to find and rescue any American prisoners still being held in Southeast Asia, Shatner denied financing an undercover operation—"just the life story of a man with whom I became enthralled."

Shatner said he was shocked to hear that Gritz also received \$30,000 from actor Clint Eastwood. The amount was reported by a former Green Beret sergeant who accompanied Gritz to Laos. A spokesman for Eastwood said the actor could not be reached for comment.

In interviews before departing for Thailand on his current mission, Gritz said he had led a squad of Americans and anti-communist guerrillas on a raid into Laos late last year that cost one life in a futile search for any American servicemen still being held there.

Gritz said opposing forces killed one of his Laotian guerrillas and wounded three others. All four Americans returned safely, he said. Gritz was last reported in Thailand, planning to lead a new expedition into Laos late this month and early next.

His exact whereabouts was not known. But an associate of Gritz, who asked that he not be identified, said that if anyone wanted to stop Gritz, "they're too late." The associate did not make clear whether he meant that Gritz had already entered Laos.

In Bangkok, Prasong Soonsiri, secretary general of the Thai National Security Council, said that any

Times staff writers Paul Dean in Los Angeles and Bob Sexter in Bangkok contributed to this article.

American who tries to cross into Laos for clandestine purposes would be arrested and deported.

Jett Sucharitkul, a Foreign Ministry spokesman, said the Thai immigration department was looking for Gritz and members of his team and would take legal action against them for entering Thailand illegally and possessing weapons without authorization.

In Washington, Rear Adm. Allan G. Paulson, assistant vice director for intelligence collection management at the Defense Intelligence Agency, said that "people claiming to represent Gritz had approached the U.S. government on several levels" before he entered Laos last year.

"Each time," Paulson said, "they were told that we could not support or condone any operations they were contemplating, private operations to rescue prisoners, because they were both illegal as far as the laws of the countries were concerned and possibly illegal insofar as our laws were concerned."

"In any event," Paulson added, "we don't consider them helpful."

The admiral refused to identify the representatives of Gritz. He said he was not sure whether Gritz got the message.

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Investigated in 1982

The Pentagon refused to specify which U.S. statutes it tried to warn Gritz about. But, in Los Angeles, FBI spokesman John Hoos said agents investigated Gritz during the last half of 1982 for possible violation of federal law. Section 960 of Title 18, U.S. Code, prescribes that:

"Whoever, within the United States, knowingly begins or sets on foot or provides or prepares a means for or furnishes the money for, or takes part in, any military or naval expedition or enterprise to be carried on from thence against the territory or dominion of any foreign prince or state, or of any colony, district, or people with whom the United States is at peace, shall be fined not more than \$3,000 or imprisoned not more than three years, or both."

- Hoos said the investigation was closed in early January "mainly because the assistant U.S. attorney on

the case here in Los Angeles declined to prosecute."

Alex Williams, chief assistant to U.S. Atty. Stephen Trott, said Monday afternoon that officials were reviewing new information about Gritz.

Referring to a Times report Monday morning about Gritz's armed encounter with forces inside Laos, Williams said, "The information in The Times is being reviewed here and in Washington."

In an interview with The Times before leaving on the Laos mission, Gritz anticipated finding and possibly rescuing an American POW and said, "Once it's over, I don't (care). . . . The only law violated is when we

cross the border, and by that time, we're not going to cross it until I know what we're crossing for, and . . . we are still a government of, by and for the people, so I'm not worried."

At a news conference at the Burbank Studios of his "T. J. Hooker" television series, Shatner told how he became "intrigued and enthralled" with Gritz last year. Shatner said he paid Gritz \$10,000 for the film rights to his life story—"the same way you would buy an apple from a vendor."

"I don't know what he was using the money for," Shatner said. He told The Times, "When you pay a man, it's not my custom to ask him what he's going to do with the money."

An electronics manufacturer that provided support to

Gritz's mission, Litton Industries Inc., said it did so "as a patriotic gesture." Litton spokesman Robert Knapp refused to comment further.

Gritz said he and his team were equipped with "nuclear fire plan boxes" from Litton that enabled them to communicate from Laos, instantly and in bursts of code, with a radio base station in Thailand—and with officials in Washington, if necessary.

Not all rescue authorities considered Gritz's mission helpful to the POW cause. Texas industrialist H. Ross Perot, who mounted a mission that freed two of his employees from an Iranian prison four years ago, called Gritz's efforts "poorly conceived and poorly executed."

"They are completely counterproductive," Perot said. "He should get out of it completely. It's totally counterproductive."

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POW Group Says Mission 'Will Only Hurt' Its Efforts

By MARK GLADSTONE and RICHARD E. MEYER, *Times Staff Writers*

The chairman of the league of families of American servicemen missing in Southeast Asia said Tuesday that a POW rescue mission mounted by former Green Beret Lt. Col. James G. (Bo) Gritz "will only hurt" his organization's efforts to bring out any captives still in Laos.

"I'm very apprehensive," said George Brooks, chairman of the National League of Families of American Prisoners and Missing in Southeast Asia. "I believe that men are being held in both Laos and Vietnam. I don't know what the reaction of those governments is going to be."

Brooks, 64, of New Windsor, N.Y., said in an interview that during a visit to Laos last year, members of the league tried to "encourage a relationship in which their government could work with ours." He said they were told private missions "would be an embarrassment."

"It's too bad," Brooks said, "that the Gritz mission came off."

Futile POW Search

Gritz, 44, of Westchester, led a squad of four Americans and 15 anti-communist guerrillas on a raid into Laos late last year in a futile search for American POWs. Gritz said Pathet Lao forces killed one of his guerrillas in a jungle battle and wounded three others. He said no Americans were hurt.

Associates of Gritz again denied Tuesday that Dominic Zappone, 23, of Van Nuys, a member of Gritz's team, was captured during the attack, which occurred Nov. 30, after Gritz led his men across the Mekong River south of Nakhon Phanom, on the border with Thailand.

Another of Gritz's men, Charles J. Patterson, 37, a former Army Special Forces sergeant, said Zappone was ransomed for \$17,500 and medical supplies. Patterson said Zappone became separated from the rest of the team at the peak of the battle and disappeared.

Gritz's associates, who asked that they not be identified, said Zappone had indeed become separated. But, they said, it was later learned that Zappone was with friendly forces. The associates attributed Patterson's account to confusion as the team fled.

They said that no ransom had been paid for any member of the mission and that all returned to Thailand safely.

In reply to queries, Maj. Bob Shields, a Pentagon spokesman, said in Washington, "The U.S. government, the U.S. Embassy (in Bangkok), the U.S. State Department did not pay any ransom."

'Understand Our Position'

A State Department official said he doubts that the Gritz mission strained relations with Laos. "We don't speculate on those suggestions," said the official, who asked to remain anonymous. "But I would note that the Laos understand our position: We neither condone nor support such acts."

Since the signing of the Paris peace accords in January, 1973, Hanoi has returned 591 U.S. prisoners. But the whereabouts of 2,494 others remain a mystery. Many are pilots who were shot down over the jungles of Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia. Most have been declared legally dead in court proceedings.

But Brooks and other members of the league of families still hope that some are alive. Brooks has led groups of league members on trips to Laos to discuss with Laotian officials the possibility of survivors. The most recent of these trips was made in late September.

During that visit, Brooks said, the league encouraged cooperation from the Laotian government in seeking Americans who he believes are still alive but are not known to the Lao officials "because of the dense jungle and lack of communication."

Brooks said he fears "that the relationships that we encouraged at that time are going to be seriously damaged by this (Gritz) operation, and, most importantly, whatever men are still alive over there—I don't know what's going to happen to them."

The Gritz mission, Brooks said, "will only hurt things that we've been doing. I'm very, very fearful it will jeopardize those contacts."

Last January, the remains of Brooks' son, Navy Lt. Cmdr. Nicholas G. Brooks, a flier who was shot down over Laos 13 years ago, were recovered from Laos.

"We lost 560 men in that country," Brooks said. "None came back until then."

Desperate Efforts to Finance POW Missions Described

Funds for Raid: Tangled Web of Intrigue

By RICHARD E. MEYER and MARK GLADSTONE, *Times Staff Writers*

Bo Gritz leaned his motorcycle into the turn and gunned it up to the Little League ballpark. Gene Wilson held on with white knuckles, the tails of his suit coat flying. It wasn't the way Litton executives usually rode to work, but he and Bo Gritz had some secret business to conduct.

It required weaving in and out of Westchester traffic to be certain they were not followed. The motorcycle, Gritz had decided, would be best for that. It was a Sunday afternoon, but the ballpark was perfect—empty and quiet. An elderly man passed by, walking his dog. He paid no attention.

In the parking lot, Vinnie Arnone, a Gritz commando, stood beside a beige Mercury Cougar. Nervously, he wet his lips, then wiped them on a sleeve. He had spread Bible-sized metal boxes across the trunk of the car.

Gritz eyed Wilson. "Check them,"

he said, teasing. "Make sure they're real."

Wilson gave him a skittish smile.

The boxes, Gritz said later, were "nuclear fire plan boxes." Commanders in a nuclear firefight could use them to communicate instantly and in bursts of scrambled code. One

by one, Wilson tried them out. He wrote their serial numbers on a yellow legal pad. When he was satisfied, Wilson climbed back onto the motorcycle, grabbed Gritz's leather jacket and roared off with him.

In the darkness of a parking lot the next night at the Amfac Hotel a few blocks away, Arnone lifted the boxes out of his trunk and placed them into the trunk of a cream-colored Chevrolet driven by Leo Thorsness, another Litton executive and a former Vietnam prisoner of war. In return, Litton gave Gritz what he said was a check for \$40,000—enough money to complete his undercover mission.

The clandestine meetings were part of an effort by James G. (Bo) Gritz (pronounced Grighs), 44, a retired Green Beret lieutenant colonel, and his men to raise funds to search for U.S. servicemen thought

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WEATHER

U.S. Weather Service forecast: Today—rain ending; partial clearing; not as windy. Tonight and Friday—variable cloudiness tonight, increasing Friday.

Temperatures	High	Low
Wednesday	61	55
Today's forecast	58	mid-40s
Friday's forecast	near 60	mid-40s
Feb. 2 last year	78	48

Record high Feb. 2, 1954 66
Record low Feb. 2, 1880 34

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POWS: Desperate Efforts to Raise Funds Described

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to be held in Southeast Asia. In a serpentine arrangement, Gritz said, he had accepted \$50,000 from Litton Industries—money he suspected had been given to Litton by the U.S. government. Then, Gritz said, he had used the money to buy 14 of Litton's black boxes.

He had taken the boxes to Southeast Asia to communicate with members of a team he led last November on a futile raid into Laos. The raid had cost the life of one of his anti-communist Laotian guerrillas. Now, in January, he needed more money to go back. But Litton balked at raising it, Gritz said, so he threatened to sell the boxes—at least half in jest. Litton quickly agreed to buy them back, he said, and he got most of the \$50,000 back.

The unusual arrangement, about which Litton spokesman Robert Knapp declines to comment, was the latest in a series of desperate fund-raising efforts by Gritz and his supporters to finance four POW rescue missions, starting in 1981. Gritz has received untold thousands of dollars from Hollywood actors, former military officers, conservative industrialists, MIA families and contributors who a Gritz team member described as "little old ladies in tennis shoes."

Despite the efforts, the money was never enough. At least one Gritz supporter claims to have stolen military equipment to make up for what the team could not afford to buy. Another claims to have committed fraud to obtain funds.

'Never Taken a Penny'

Many of the men Gritz recruited for his missions—most of them also former Green Berets—say they are hundreds of dollars out of pocket because he did not pay them or reimburse their expenses. Many are bitter and vow they will never work for him again. Gritz concedes that he has been chronically short of money. He praises a number of his men who have worked for him without pay and said, "I've never taken a penny of what we have gotten for myself."

Gritz began fund raising for his Laotian mission—which he called Operation Lazarus—with a phone call nearly a year ago to a fellow veteran, David A. Christian, in Washington Crossing, Pa. Christian founded the United Vietnam Veterans Organization.

In an interview with The Times, Gritz said he had been worried that "anyone who would give me money would be violating (federal law) and could be found guilty." The law bans furnishing money for any private military "expedition or enterprise" against such countries as Laos, with which the United States is at peace.

Gritz said he told Christian, "I got to find some way to launder money . . . so that the people that are willing to go out on a limb to help us don't get their necks cut off in the event of the worst."

Gritz added, "And he (Christian) said, 'Bo, you don't need to launder money. You send

Ad under "Electronic Equipment" that Gritz took out in The Times to frighten Litton executives; it proved successful.

me \$250 and 10 Vietnam Veterans' names, and I will send you a charter, and you will be known as the POW/MIA Never-Forget Chapter of the UVVO in Los Angeles, and you can collect \$1 million if you want, and you can dedicate as much of that money as you want to pursuing POW/MIA information. It's perfectly legal."

Christian told The Times that Gritz's account was essentially accurate—but that he does not believe Gritz used the word "launder."

Tax-Deductible Contributions

Gritz took his advice. In addition to making donations legal, Gritz said, the UVVO charter made the contributions tax deductible.

With charter in hand, Gritz traveled the country begging funds.

Among his first stops was Massachusetts, where Arnone, 36, a former Green Beret, handled his East Coast money campaign. Arnone said he and Gritz raised \$7,000 in \$5 and \$10 "mom and pop donations" after a radio talk show. A dance for former members of the Army Special Forces in Ipswich raised between \$6,000 and \$7,000, he said. But Arnone said the dance committee, which called itself Operation Triumph, gave Gritz only \$1,000 of the total.

"With the rest," Arnone said, "they bought POW T-shirts that they couldn't sell."

Arnone said he collected an additional \$26,000 in checks. "We said it all along," Arnone declared in an interview at his home in Malden, Mass. "Give me the money and we'll do it (rescue some POWs)."

On his money hunt, Gritz went to Washington, D.C., where the National League of Families of American Prisoners and Missing in Southeast Asia was holding its convention. He met Jack Bailey, a retired Air Force colonel and fighter pilot who had been operating a refitted Australian mine sweeper in the South China Sea for his own San Francisco-based charity, called Operation Rescue. He used the boat to rescue Vietnamese refugees at sea from pirates.

Bailey also was using the boat as a cover to

gather information about any U.S. prisoners of war that the refugees claimed were still in captivity.

Gritz talked Bailey into joining his effort. He sealed the deal by giving Bailey \$5,000 for his boat, which they planned to use to land Gritz commandos along the coast of the Gulf of Thailand.

For his part, Bailey collected contributions in Texas and Washington for a new boat. But Bailey and Gritz subsequently had a falling out. In an interview this week, Bailey blamed the disagreement partly on what he said was a demand by Gritz for \$18,000 a month to pay his commando team.

'Left Out in the Dark'

"I'm no longer associated in any way with any of these people," Bailey said. "I was completely left out in the dark on every damn thing, especially on the financial side of the thing."

"He (Gritz) bought some equipment from a friend of mine and didn't pay him, so I've paid it—\$4,970. The only reason I became involved with these people is I thought they could do something."

Bailey said he and Gritz met with Frederick W. O'Green, chairman of Litton Industries, last September. He said O'Green promised money for equipment. The money, Bailey said, went directly to Gritz.

O'Green has not responded to repeated attempts for comment. Knapp, the spokesman for Litton, the nation's 11th-largest defense contractor, would say only that the firm had "provided some support . . . as a patriotic gesture." When asked whether it was the U.S. government that actually had provided any of the support, Rear Adm. Allan Paulson, chief of intelligence collection at the Pentagon, said, "The government is not involved."

'Fact Is I'm Going Back'

With the \$50,000 he obtained from Litton, Gritz said, he was able to buy what he called a \$1-million worth of Litton's black boxes back in January, when Litton resisted his plan for another \$31,000 to return to Southeast Asia to complete his POW hunt. Gritz said the company demanded its boxes back. Angered, Gritz said he replied, "The simple fact is I'm going back if I have to sell your equipment to do it."

On Jan. 14, Gritz took out a classified ad in The Times offering the black boxes to the highest bidder in a "one-day-only discreet sale."

"That was just meant to show I'm really serious about it," he said at the time. "I'm not going to sell the damn things to anybody—but I called my (Litton) guy's secretary, and I said, 'Listen, I want you to pass this on to the chairman—will you?' and I read her the ad."

"Well, about 15 minutes later I got this panicked call from the guy, who said, 'My secretary gave me a very disturbing notice'."

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POWS: Secret Meetings Over Raid Funds

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"And I said, 'Yeah, it's the truth. You guys are stonewalling me, and I'm serious. I've got to get back over there and finish this thing.'"

Before long, Gritz said, the buy-back arrangement was worked out. "I hate like hell to threaten," Gritz said. "It is extortion. But we've come 2,999 steps, and all of a sudden some son of a bitch says we can't go the 3,000th."

Gritz, who returned to Southeast Asia shortly after the black boxes were transferred in the Amfac Hotel parking lot, said he did not believe that operating without them would do his mission irreparable harm.

"It means we'll have to be on the run a lot more," he said.

When asked about the Byzantine transfer arrangements at the hotel and the Little League park, Wilson, program manager at Litton, referred all questions to Knapp. Thorsness, director of Litton's corporate civic affairs, declared, "I will do whatever I can to try and protect the lives of any prisoners."

Met William Shatner

While he was making the Litton arrangements, Gritz established a beachhead in Hollywood. Through a friend, Los Angeles Police Sgt. Richard Clark, who is a technical adviser for the television show "T. J. Hooker," Gritz met its star, William Shatner, on the set at Burbank Studios.

Gritz agreed to sell Shatner the rights to his life story for \$10,000. Shatner paid with money from Paramount

Times staff writers Paul Dean in Los Angeles and Bob Sector in Bangkok and researchers Nina Green and Doug Conner in Los Angeles contributed to this article.

Studios, for whom he said he is developing film scripts. Arnone said the funds went toward the mission.

Shatner denied financing a rescue operation—only a film biography. "He (Gritz) used my money in the way he saw fit," the actor said.

At the same time, Charles J. Patterson, 37, a former Special Forces sergeant and a member of Gritz's team, said Gritz persuaded actor Clint Eastwood to contribute \$30,000 to the mission.

'Special Purpose Equipment'

Patterson said Gritz flew on Eastwood's chartered jet to Redding and drove 70 miles south to the actor's Rising River Ranch. "We showed him (Eastwood) the special purpose equipment, the laser sights, the night vision equipment," said Patterson, who accompanied Gritz on the visit. "We told him what we were going to do and that we needed money."

Eastwood was "unsure about it being a legal tax donation," Patterson said. "In fact, he was going to have his lawyers check into it." Soon afterward, Patterson said, Eastwood wrote a check to Gritz's Never-Forget veterans group.

When asked about the contribution, Eastwood declined to comment.

After the fatal attack in Laos, Patterson returned to the United States disillusioned and broke. He complained that Gritz had not paid him the \$500 a week he said he had been promised for the mission.

Patterson sold his story to Soldier of Fortune magazine, a military-oriented adventure magazine, for \$5,000.

The hallmark of Gritz's missions—financial problems—plagued two earlier attempts to mount rescue efforts. He called them Operation Velvet Hammer in February and March of 1981 and Operation Grand Eagle later that year.

J. D. Bath, a retired Green Beret sergeant who participated in both, said Velvet Hammer broke up because Gritz breached security by giving media interviews. Two dozen of his men had to borrow money, Bath said, to fly home from the operation's Florida training site.

George Brooks, chairman of the league of POW/MIA families, said he gave Gritz \$20,000 to be distributed to families of the mission members. Gritz said only \$1,000 actually was paid to a team member, with the rest spent to defray expenses.

The money came from the interest on the salary paid to Brooks' son while he was missing in action in Laos. The son's remains were recovered from Laos last year.

In addition, Brooks said he had spent \$5,800 for return air fare for Velvet Hammer team members.

"There was no thank you, go to hell or anything (from Gritz)," Brooks said. "I haven't even received an accounting for the \$20,000."

Finals Jan 2 Americans Linked to POW Mission

Held 2 Days, Charged With Illegal Radio Gear; They Deny Tie to Gritz Operation

By BOB SECTER, Times Staff Writer

BANGKOK, Thailand—Two Americans reportedly on a POW rescue mission joined by ex-Green Beret Lt. Col. mes G. (Bo) Gritz were jailed for two days in northeastern Thailand on charges possessing illegal communications equipment, authorities said Tuesday.

Police said that Lance Edward Trimmer, 43, and Lynn Standerwick, 25, were arrested Sunday at a rented house in Khon Phanom, a provincial capital 450 miles northeast of Bangkok, directly across the Mekong River from Laos.

In a brief telephone conversation with the Times late Tuesday, Trimmer said and Standerwick were out of jail at the moment but that he was "not sure" they were out of trouble.

Trimmer denied any knowledge of illegal radio equipment.

He also denied any connection with it, of Westchester, Calif., who has joined missions in the past aimed at scouting U.S. servicemen thought by me to have been held prisoner in Laos since the Vietnam War, Gritz is reported in Southeast Asia on another such rescue mission.

"I came up here to see a friend who is going to take me to a refugee camp, and they (the police) come in the house, and is thing (the radio) is in another room at I don't know anything about," declared Trimmer, who police said identified himself as a tourist.

Standerwick claimed to be a representative of an International Boy Scout organization, according to Lt. Col. Thai-

Nearly 2,500 servicemen were once considered missing in action in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia. Virtually all are now listed as dead by the Pentagon, though their bodies have not been recovered.

The Thai government has denounced Gritz's rescue attempts and ordered police in northeastern Thailand to arrest him and members of his team. Gritz associates have told The Times it is already "too late" to keep Gritz from going ahead with his plans to enter Laos.

Thalerngsakdi, the provincial police official, said Trimmer and Standerwick were charged with illegally possessing a radio transmitter that could interfere with or intercept Thai military communications. He said the charge carries a maximum penalty of five years in jail.

It was not clear late Tuesday why Trimmer and Standerwick had been let out of the Nakhon Phanom police lockup or what the status was of the charges against them. Trimmer declined to answer questions about those matters.

Trimmer's phone conversation with The Times came shortly after he and Standerwick were visited at the jail by John Muehlke, a U.S. consular official in northeastern Thailand.

Muehlke, who took Trimmer and Standerwick to the house of a local police official to talk with them privately, refused to discuss the case with The Times or even to reveal his position with the American government. However, Richard Virden, a spokesman for the U.S. Embassy in Bangkok, identified Muehlke as a consular official whose job it would be to assist U.S. citizens with legal problems.

State Department officials have denied any government involvement with the Gritz missions and have denounced them as counterproductive to official American efforts to secure information from the Laotian government about Americans killed or missing in action. Gritz, on the other hand, asserts that he has operated with the approval and assistance of U.S. intelligence officials.

Thalerngsakdi said the house in which Trimmer and Standerwick were arrested had been under observation for "several weeks," but he declined to say why police moved in when they did. The house is owned by an ethnic Vietnamese named Loh Tharaphant, Thalerngsakdi said. He said Loh claimed to have rented the house several months ago to three men identifying themselves as oil exploration workers for Esso, a division of Exxon.

In Houston, Tex., Albert C. McClain, vice president and general counsel for Esso Exploration Inc., said he had heard nothing about Gritz or his expedition.

"We would not have authorized him to use Esso as a cover," McClain said. "I can't guarantee that he didn't bump into someone in the field—a geologist or rigger or whatever, who could have told him anything—but certainly no official of the corporation gave him any authorization."

Thalerngsakdi said numerous other items with potential military applications, including gas masks, scuba-diving gear, jungle fatigues and binoculars, were discovered in the house. But he said possession of those materials was not considered illegal.

Trimmer and Standerwick claimed not to have known each other before moving into Loh's house recently, and both also denied previous knowledge of three other Americans who were already there when they arrived, Thalerngsakdi said.

In Irving, Tex., Raul Chavez, the national spokesman for Boy Scouts of America, said, "The Boy Scouts of Amer-

January. "I'm just a little worried about him," she said. "Anytime that somebody's gone, a person gets worried—particularly if they get arrested."

Virden, the U.S. Embassy spokesman here, said it would not be unusual for a consular official like Muehlke to check up on Trimmer and Standerwick. "Whenever there is an American arrested, we send a consular officer to do what consuls do in cases like that," Virden said. "They offer to get the accused a lawyer if he needs one. They are there to ensure that the Americans are being treated without discrimination under the local laws."

"Our government has said on the record what we think of this kind of thing

(private rescue missions)," Virden said. "We don't like it, we don't condone it, we don't support it and it causes problems."

Those problems, American officials have said, are caused with the Laotian government, which they say has been more amenable recently to U.S. efforts to help recover the remains of Americans killed in Laos.

As if to underscore the point, a four-man team from the Hawaii headquarters of the U.S. agency in charge of the search for the remains of missing Americans reportedly received a stern lecture about the Gritz missions from Laotian officials when the group visited Vientiane, the Laotian capital, last weekend.



Great Falls (Mont.) Tribune

ance Trimmer

Thalerngsakdi Sukhonthamarn of the Nakhon Phanom provincial police force.

However, both Trimmer and Standerwick have been linked with Gritz in the past, and Gritz associates say they are part of his current mission.

Standerwick, whose father, an Air Force pilot, was shot down over Laos in 1971, was identified by Gritz associates as one of a number of women on the Gritz team who are the daughters of Americans still officially listed as missing in action.

In a recent interview with The Times, Gritz called this group of daughters "Angels East," an apparent play on characters in the television series "Charlie's Angels." Gritz said the "Angels" were stationed at a "safehouse" in Washington during November and December while he led a squad of Americans and anti-Communist Laotian guerrillas on a raid into Laos. The raid cost the life of one of the Laotians and wounded three

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Los Angeles Times

POW: 'Some ID' on U.S. Captives in Laos Cited

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brother to me. I've got nothing bad to say about him. . . ."

In his message from Laos, Gritz told how his involvement in POW rescue missions began. He said the federal government provided the impetus.

"I did not get into this business four years ago of my own accord," Gritz said. "I was asked to look into

the POW situation' by executive branch officials acting through private sector."

In past interviews with The Times, Gritz has said that Harold Aaron, an Army lieutenant general who is now dead, first aroused his curiosity about POWs. He quoted Aaron as telling him, "We now have overwhelming evidence that Americans are being held against their

will."

Gritz retired from the Army. By early 1979, he was traveling in Asia for Hughes Aircraft Co. Gritz contended that his job with Hughes was arranged. Hughes has said Gritz was hired through standard procedures. In his letter from Laos, Gritz said he was "using Hughes until a target was given me in January, 1981, which led to Velvet Hammer."

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Monday, February 21, 1983/Part I 7

That was what Gritz called his first mission. He assembled a team of 23 persons, mostly former Green Berets, at the American Cheerleading Academy at Fruitland, Fla. The team included seer Karen Page, who had impressed Gritz with visions and target details known only to him, and Gil Boyne, owner of a hypnotism training center.

Gritz, one of Boyne's students, has said in an interview that he had asked Boyne to teach the team self-hypnosis "to gain a full night's sleep in 15 minutes, be more alert,

be able to suppress pain in the event of an injury and be able to move farther, eat less, whatever is required."

Some members of the Velvet Hammer team, including J. D. Bath, a former Green Beret from Lakeland, Fla., questioned "the sanity" of using seers and hypnotists—and raised other questions when Gritz included on the team a television news crew, a photographer and Washington Post reporter Art Harris.

Team members raised even more

questions about operational security when Gritz provided a Florida newspaper reporter with details that were published in the Orlando Sentinel and its parent newspaper, the Chicago Tribune.

Gritz said he finally got word that the government, under newly elected President Ronald Reagan, was planning its own rescue mission. In interviews later, Gritz said he had learned that the government mission would involve the Delta

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Los Angeles Times

POW: U.S. Agencies Deny Knowledge of Plans

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Force of the Joint Special Operations Command at Ft. Bragg—the unit that tried in vain in 1980 to rescue Americans held hostage in Iran.

"So I was instructed at that point in time to stand down, to go home," Gritz said.

As he disbanded Velvet Hammer, the government sponsored at least two forays into Laos in search of POWs. The expeditions, using Southeast Asians, found no evidence of any Americans being held captive. News accounts published at the time said one patrol was fired upon.

"Then," Gritz said in his letter to The Times, "another secret intelligence activity, approached me saying they wanted to pick up the action.

"So started Grand Eagle."

This second attempt by Gritz was a reconnaissance effort.

Gritz sent four men to Thailand: Bath, a retired Special Forces sergeant; Ben Dunakowski of Lancaster, Calif., also retired from the Special Forces; William Macris of Salisbury, Mass., a veteran of World War II and the Vietnam War; and Scott Barnes of Redondo Beach, Calif., a former policeman who said he was an informant against the Hell's Angels.

They went to Nakhon Phanom and other towns and villages on the Thai side of the Mekong River and

questioned Lao supporters of Gen. Vang Pao, the commander of Laotian Hmong hill tribes that fought for the CIA in Laos during the Vietnam War. It was Gritz's hope that the Hmong might help him find POWs. The Gritz team said it could communicate back to the United States through a telex line at the Energy Department.

They used the code name BOHICA. Gritz said it stood for "Bend Over. Here It Comes Again."

Used Telex Number

The Energy Department denies any involvement in Grand Eagle. But Dunakowski said one or two messages were sent back to the United States using one of the department's telex numbers.

When the team returned to the United States, Barnes claimed that he had crossed the Mekong into Laos with a mysterious American who was not a team member. Barnes said they had photographed two Caucasians in a Lao prison camp. He claimed the team subsequently received a message ordering that the Caucasians be assassinated.

Gritz and all other members of his team denied Barnes' story. A check of hotel registers and telephone and telex records showed no gaps in Barnes' stay in Thailand. Vang Pao supporters in the village of Ban Don Phaeng, who Barnes claimed had accompanied him into Laos, said

that Barnes had not crossed the Mekong.

But his story was printed in the Covert Action Information Bulletin, a Washington-based newsletter that specializes in publicizing information about U.S. intelligence agencies. It was reprinted in some foreign newspapers. U.S. officials said it also became part of propaganda broadcasts on Radio Hanoi.

At the same time, Gritz said, Grand Eagle also became snarled in a bureaucratic tangle in Washington, mainly among U.S. intelligence agencies.

"I was fired from Grand Eagle," he said in his message from Laos. "The project was put on the shelf."

"But I just couldn't quit, having worked the problem so long and having access to information that identified probable targets. I put together Operation Lazarus as a totally private sector operation to finish what the bureaucracy was too caught up in a political thicket to do. . . .

"We are after one thing—the truth—that's all. . . . While true, some of my personnel haven't been world-class commandos. . . . They were there. Where are our critics? . . . The American people need to know if there are Americans alive in captivity, and if so, where they are and who they are. . . . I am not a fanatic. I may not bring home Americans, but I intend to bring home an answer.

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White House Says It Discouraged Gritz Effort

Eastwood Told Reagan of Planned POW Raid

By RICHARD E. MEYER and MARK GLADSTONE, *Times Staff Writers*

WASHINGTON—Actor Clint Eastwood told President Reagan last fall that former Green Beret James G. (Bo) Gritz was planning a raid into Laos to find American prisoners of war, *The Times* has learned.

Reagan asked his national security advisers about Gritz and what he was doing and was told that the retired lieutenant colonel was "not somebody we ought to be involved with," Administration officials said Thursday.

The President agreed, they said. Officials from the White House

and Department of Defense said they told Gritz's associates to pass the word not to proceed.

However, Gritz team members said the messages they received in Southeast Asia told them the President supported them completely.

Lyndon K. Allin, White House deputy press secretary, declined to answer specific questions about the President, Eastwood and Gritz. "There have been a number of approaches, or a number of different ways, in which information has come to the government about this operation," Allin said. "... These cross-border forays and other independent efforts were discouraged."

'POW ID' Found

Gritz, 44, a Vietnam veteran from the Los Angeles suburb of Westchester, led a patrol of Americans and anti-Communist guerrillas on a futile search into Laos last Nov. 27. Hostile forces attacked the patrol, killing one of the guerrillas and wounding three others. Gritz embarked on another raid Jan. 30, which cost the life of a second guerrilla. Gritz and the Americans on his team were not injured.

Gritz said in a message dated Feb. 12 sent from Laos by runner and received by *The Times* last week—*enough*—that he has "some POW ID." But he did not say whether the "ID" was from a living prisoner or a military man long dead.

Government involvement in Gritz's mission has been the subject of closed hearings and of staff

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POW: Eastwood Told President of Gritz's Plans to Hunt for Prisoners

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inquiry by the Senate Intelligence Committee, which has maintained an active interest in Gritz since last spring. According to executive-branch accounts given to committee members, it was the Defense Intelligence Agency that first interested Gritz in an effort to rescue POWs.

'Loose Cannon':

In late 1980 or early 1981, according to these accounts, high-level officials in the intelligence agency, reluctant to make the approach themselves, sent a lower-level carrier officer to ask Gritz whether he might be interested in mounting an official government operation—"a legitimate operation," it was called—to find any American prisoners left in Southeast Asia after the Vietnam War.

Gritz, a highly decorated veteran of special Army operations, had become increasingly vocal about his beliefs that there might be prisoners left behind, according to these briefings, and the DIA indicated to Gritz that he would be wise to "tone down his profile" if he wanted to become part of a government effort. But Gritz did little to follow this advice.

The Defense Intelligence Agency decided he was "kind of a loose cannon," according to the accounts of those who briefed the Intelligence Committee, and it was decided that he would be too risky to deal

with officially.

Last November, at about the time Gritz decided to enter Laos on his own, according to these accounts, Eastwood phoned the President at his ranch in Santa Barbara, Calif., and informed him that he had contributed \$50,000 to the Gritz mission. Gritz's associates have said the amount was \$30,000. Eastwood has declined comment.

The actor told Reagan that the government should be officially involved in POW rescue efforts, according to the testimony of those who briefed the committee, and that the federal government ought to help Gritz, not leave the matter up to individuals such as Eastwood.

When the President returned to Washington, Administration officials told The Times, he met in the Oval Office with Robert McFarlane, chief deputy to National Security Adviser William P. Clark.

Reagan asked who Gritz was and what he was doing, these sources said.

Operating on Rumors

McFarlane told him that Gritz was operating on rumors and had no confirmed intelligence about any locations where POWs might be held, and that the Administration had been trying to discourage him, Administration sources said.

"He (McFarlane) told the President that Gritz was not somebody we ought to be involved with," one

Administration official said.

"The President said, 'Fine,'" the official added.

All along, this source said, White House officials and Pentagon officers were telling persons who were working with Gritz to instruct him to refrain from any "cross-border operations."

The White House was concerned that such private raids would damage negotiations with the Laotian government. The Administration was seeking permission to visit sites where U.S. aircraft fell during the

Times Staff Writer Robert L. Jackson contributed to this article.

war so that officials could search for remains.

The White House also was concerned that such privately mounted raids would signal Laotians and Vietnamese that only a few individual Americans were interested in accounting for the missing in action—and that the Reagan Administration had no real commitment to discovering their fate.

Rear Adm. Allan G. Paulson, the officer in charge of intelligence collection at the Pentagon, told The Times that "people claiming to represent Gritz . . . were told that we could not support or condone any operations they were contemplating. . . . We don't consider

them (such operations) helpful."

There is no indication that anyone in the White House or in the Pentagon talked to Gritz directly. But if Gritz did not get the message, an Administration official declared, "then everybody associated with him doesn't talk to him."

However, accounts by Gritz's associates and messages they sent to him and his team members in Southeast Asia give a sharply different interpretation of Reagan's feelings about the mission.

No Request to Halt Mission

Jack Bailey, a retired Air Force colonel and fighter pilot who operates a ship in the South China Sea for his own San Francisco-based charity, Operation Rescue, said a staff member at the National Security Council spoke to him by telephone several times last year.

Bailey, who was helping Gritz at the time, said the White House official asked him to delay the Gritz mission until after a group from the National League of Families of American Prisoners Missing in Southeast Asia had visited a crash site in Laos in late September.

But there was no request to halt the Gritz mission, Bailey said.

He said he told the NSC official: "If you want me to fold up my tent right now, you tell me. That's all you have to do."

Was he given such instructions?

"No, of course not," Bailey said.

A member of Gritz's team of first foray into Laos in November, Charles J. Patterson, 37, of Danville, Calif., told The Times that he and Eastwood say he could get word from the President if it was needed. "He said he could get in contact with the President," Patterson declared. "He had the phone number. And when we supposed to get a prisoner, he was going to the President and tell him we have one and that we needed help to get the rest."

Gritz's associates who saw messages from support personnel in Laos and his team in Southeast Asia said the messages repeatedly mentioned Eastwood's assistance as being the President's backing.

One associate quoted a message as declaring: "Have the President full support."

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Los Angeles Times

POW: 'Some ID' on U.S. Captives in Laos Cited

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brother to me. I've got nothing bad to say about him. . . ."

In his message from Laos, Gritz told how his involvement in POW rescue missions began. He said the federal government provided the impetus.

"I did not get into this business four years ago of my own accord," Gritz said. "I was asked to 'look into

the POW situation' by executive branch officials acting through private sector."

In past interviews with The Times, Gritz has said that Harold Aaron, an Army lieutenant general who is now dead, first aroused his curiosity about POWs. He quoted Aaron as telling him, "We now have overwhelming evidence that Americans are being held against their

will."

Gritz retired from the Army. By early 1979, he was traveling in Asia for Hughes Aircraft Co. Gritz contended that his job with Hughes was arranged. Hughes has said Gritz was hired through standard procedures. In his letter from Laos, Gritz said he was "using Hughes until a target was given me in January, 1981, which led to Velvet Hammer."

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POW: New Laos Raid Reported

Continued from First Page

sign and to fill out, if possible, with "other dossier info to ID them." Gritz said one agent carried a camera.

Gritz said nothing more about the raid. He did not make it clear whether the "POW ID" he claimed to possess was such a letter, dossier, a photograph or something else. And he did not indicate whether it was from a living prisoner or a military man long dead.

"This report is being hastily written from a jungle location deep in central Laos and will hopefully be delivered by messenger to you ASAP," Gritz wrote, disclosing for the first time where he has been since he returned to Southeast Asia in January. He said he was at a "northern location," apparently well above the Thai border town of Nakhon Phanom, on the banks of the Mekong River.

In his message, Gritz also: —Hinted that he might go into Vietnam. Describing the validity of his travel papers, he added cryptically, "The only thing that has happened is that we don't have a visa for VN (Vietnam). But then, we don't have any diplomatic relations with them, either."

"Unfortunately, travel through Laos is a necessity, which I'm sure the U.S. presence in Vientiane (the Laotian capital) is—was—aware of. If not, it wasn't because we didn't inform embassy sources."

—Declared flatly for the first time that the Central Intelligence Agency and the Defense Intelligence Agency are aware of his plans.

'Knew of Our ID'

Gritz wrote, "I have 12 CIA-DIA generated targets which, through agent reports and other verification, could hold U.S. POWs. . . . CIA-DIA knew of our ID, acquisition and test of state-of-the-art secure Alpha numeric-graphic code burst devices, night vision goggles, night vision cameras, etc. Some special equipment was furnished. Ask Rusty Capps, FBI-LA."

(At the FBI's Los Angeles field office, spokesman John Hoos said it was impossible to talk to Capps. "You won't get to him," Hoos told a reporter. "We won't even make a comment on that.")

(Rear Adm. Allan G. Paulson, in charge of intelligence collection for the DIA, said in Washington, "The government has no association whatever with Gritz." When asked if that included government people acting individually, Paulson replied, "It certainly does, as far as I'm concerned.")

(At the CIA, spokesman Levon Strong said, "We will have no comment on that wild allegation.")

—Denied breaking any laws. "We

have (I have) never intended or conspired or acted outside the laws of the United States," Gritz said. "I did not organize (Operation)

Lazarus as a vigilante group. . . . I have always been dedicated to keeping the laws of our country. I do not espouse or encourage vigilante laws."

In Washington, the Justice Department is reviewing information about Gritz's missions to determine whether they violate a federal law that bans any private military "expedition or enterprise" against such countries as Laos, with which the United States is at peace.

As for Thai laws, Gritz said twice in his letter that he brought no weapons into Thailand to use on his raids into Laos. "We have all the munitions needed in-country," Gritz said. The Thais have denounced Gritz's rescue efforts and have said that they will try to arrest him.

'We Are the Gladiators'

—Challenged his critics. "We are the gladiators," he said, "not the armchair critics, bureaucrats, politicians and pot-bellied has-beens. . . . There may be better than us—but where are they? . . . Let them either lead, follow or get the hell out of the way."

Gritz expressed particular anger at team member Charles J. Patterson, who sold a story about Gritz's activities to Soldier of Fortune, a magazine about military adventure, for \$5,000. The sale resulted in news stories disclosing Gritz's first trip into Laos last November and December.

In his letter to The Times, Gritz called Patterson "a total failure, a thief . . . a self-proclaimed coward." Gritz described the sale of Patterson's story as "criminal." He said Robert K. Brown, publisher of Soldier of Fortune, is "a phony . . . with total disregard for POWs (and) U.S. lives."

It was disclosures by Patterson and Brown that stirred military activity against the Gritz mission in Laos, Gritz wrote. "The combined effort of Brown, his associates and Patterson have served to irrevocably damage our mission just at the precise time when we were ready to make our final efforts."

"To say that their efforts have put us in great jeopardy is to put it mildly. We were approaching the very target they disclosed."

A summary of Patterson's account, given to news reporters by Soldier of Fortune, identified the target as the Laotian village of Tchepone, also known as Sepone, about 100 miles east of the Mekong.

"Things got very antimated (sic) when the 31 Jan. (publicity) bomb fell on us," Gritz wrote. "We didn't

know why at the time, but the enemy was working overtime. We had quickly and successfully infiltrated on 30 Jan. We were surrounded and engaged heavily at times. At least one of our agents keeping a target under surveillance was captured and killed eight kilometers from the objective—due, I believe, to the (unknown to us) news splash by Brown-Patterson."

The casualty is the second death of an anti-communist Laotian guerrilla during maneuvers by Gritz. The first was during his November-December mission. On that mission, which Gritz considered the initial phase of Operation Lazarus, one Laotian was killed and three were wounded. There have been no casualties among Americans.

Brown, the Soldier of Fortune publisher, was in Central America and unavailable for comment. But Jim Monaghan, a contributing editor, said it was Gritz who was jeopardizing POW rescue efforts. He said Brown had spent \$600,000 during the last several years on his own efforts to come up with information about POWs.

Referring to Gritz's claims that Soldier of Fortune endangered lives, Monaghan declared, "I can't believe anything he says." Monaghan said Brown had refrained from making the Patterson story public until he heard that the Bangkok Post was about to publish an account of its own.

In his message, Gritz wrote that Patterson, 37, a former Army Special Forces sergeant from the Tulare County, Calif., town of Dinuba, "totally collapsed physically, mentally, emotionally" after the fire fight last fall. Patterson "was the only one to fling his boots, uniform and equipment aside before plunging into the Mekong—in his underwear," Gritz said. He said that Patterson had told him, "I have never been so afraid in my whole life."

'Kind as I Could Be'

Gritz said, "Back at NKP (Nakhon Phanom), I was as kind as I could be to Pat (Patterson). . . . Pat came down with nine reasons why he was incapable of returning—I concurred on each count. Gary (Goldman) and I (re)crossed (the Mekong). . . . I assumed (Patterson) would help at NKP. Instead, he took off with (fellow team member Dominic Zappone's) credit cards, went to Kuala Lumpur, returned to Bangkok for a few days, bought a new suit and a sapphire stone for an \$18 sterling silver ring, in each case forging Zap's signature."

"An undisclosed amount of personal money was taken and then remnants left beneath the seat of an agent handler's vehicle. . . . He also rifled my personal briefcase and took documents that were associated with the operation. Many were outdated and merely part of the record-keeping. . . . (Patterson) split for the States."

Patterson, reached at his home in California, acknowledged telling Gritz that he had been afraid. He said Gritz was correct in describing him as physically hurt. Patterson said he fell in the jungle, injuring his foot, and was "burning up with fever." But he denied any mental or emotional collapse. He said he swam the Mekong in a pair of shorts—and not in his underwear.

When asked about any stolen

Americans Linked to Raid Face Trial Over Equipment

By BOB SECTER, Times Staff Writer

BANGKOK, Thailand—Two Americans reportedly on a POW rescue mission mounted by former Green Beret Lt. Col. James G. (Bo) Gritz face trial Feb. 28 on a charge of possessing illegal communications equipment.

Lance Edward Trimmer, 43, and Lynn Standercwick, 25, have denied any connection with Gritz.

Police in the border town of Nakhon Phanom, 450 miles northeast